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In the Know Nick Eubanks, Part I

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Buckley Barlow: Hello, hello, and welcome to In the Know. This podcast is dedicated to all those listeners who want and need the best strategic and tactical advice on engineering growth. And for Season 2, it's all about digital commerce. All right, buckle up. We'll see you on the inside.

Hey, insiders, welcome to the In the Know, the digital commerce series. And I'm Buckley Barlow and we've got a great show for you today.

Today we'll be discussing SEO with Nick Eubanks, and we're going to break this up in a two-part series. So the first part is going to be about how Nick built a blog site, SEONick.net, and after only 47 posts and some digital courses that produced roughly \$4,000.00 a month in revenue – is that right, Nick?

Nick Eubanks: Yeah, between courses and affiliate] links.

Buckley Barlow: Great. He sold it for \$100,000.00, which resulted in making what, about 2,000 bucks a blog post. That's amazing. We're gonna talk about some of his strategies and tactics that he used for that site. We're gonna talk about his new SEO blog a little bit.

And then in the second part of this series, we're gonna go all in on multi-product e-commerce SEO. So Nick is a partner in an eight-figure traffic safety e-commerce store named TrafficSafetyScore.com. And I'm excited to get in and get in the know.

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And before I dive in, I just wanna say thank you to my sponsor, TurboPodcast.com. These guys have been fantastic to work with. When it comes to quality output, these guys really know how to take it to the next level. So head on over to my resource page and you can grab their link and contact information there.

So again, with us here today, Nick Eubanks. Nick, hey, stud, thanks for coming on today.

Nick Eubanks: My pleasure, man. Thanks for having me.

Buckley Barlow: So Nick, let's dive in. Tell us a little bit about you and what your role is day to day.

Nick Eubanks: It's really driving – trying to save 50,000 feet and driving a digital strategy for both Traffic Safety Store and for my e-commerce marketing agency, I'm From the Future.

Buckley Barlow: And tell me, you just – any other side projects you have going on right now?

Nick Eubanks: Oh, God, I mean, trying to – I'm actively trying to clear stuff off my plate, so I sold SEOLeads.org last March. And then after I'd sold sort of my monetization vehicle for all the leads that were coming in for SEONick, SEONick was sort of sitting out there, so I got that, wasn't trying to sell it, but we can talk more about that in a few minutes. But that just sort of – I got lucky and that came to fruition. That thing sold.

Right now, we're working on a lot of software. So we've got a project that is a search engine for HARO, Help a Reporter Out. It's a nightmare to use that service – I mean, it's an awesome service, but it's a nightmare to sift through those 20,000-word emails.

Buckley Barlow: I agree, I agree.

Nick Eubanks: So we built a search engine for that. That's getting ready to open up into private beta any day now; got an IOS app that I've been working on. It's not related to anything in e-comm or marketing. It's for therapists, just found this really inefficient process that exists for mobile therapists, and there's no solution. And it's such a simple fix.

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That's the stuff that I love. Anything where people are still using spreadsheets and Word documents to manage and anything that's super manual that can be automated very easily are just these really quick wins, really having a lot of fun doing stuff, building very little pieces of software.

Buckley Barlow: That's great, that's great. You're a busy, busy guy, but when you're making the kind of money you're making, that's a good thing, right?

Nick Eubanks: Yeah, yeah, rather be busy than not busy.

Buckley Barlow: Hey, well, and lately you've been treating yourself to some fun gifts. I teased you about this before. I'm gonna do it again just because – because I can. But recently, Nick, you posted an Instagram pic to the world of a gorgeous car that makes any kind of car junkie drool. What was the name of that car that you shared with the world?

Nick Eubanks: It's an Acid Martin V8 Vantage.

Buckley Barlow: Hey, life ain't too shabby for Nick Eubanks right now, right?

Nick Eubanks: Not too bad. I've actually – I had it out playing with it yesterday.

Buckley Barlow: Oh, that's great. Well, I think I told you that I'm a world of contrast. I'm more of a John Deere kind of guy with a Maserati on the side, so go figure.

Well, Nick, listen, cool, I've been a big fan of your content for a long time and I'm excited to dive in. So, Nick, let's get our insiders in the know on SEO, shall we?

Nick Eubanks: Absolutely.

Buckley Barlow: Let's start with SEONick.net. And before we back into – actually, let's back into the exit. Before we just jump to the exit, let's back into it with some actionable information for the listeners, for the insiders. But first, you had said that you really never even planned on making money from blogging. And yet, by most accounts, you've done really well.

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Nick Eubanks: Yeah, it's a lot of dumb luck sort of and just seeing when there was an opportunity, just taking a run at it. The best term that site ranks for now is increased website traffic. I think it still ranks one or two.

There's a rich snippet, I think, from WordStream on that SERP now, so it doesn't – the rich snippet's definitely taken some of the traffic, but it still gets – the funny thing is probably 40 percent of the traffic to that site every month, which is 50,000 to 60,000 visits when I sold it, is from that – it's not just that one keyword though, but because there's so much relevancy for that one keyword, there's probably a thousand variations, like, plurals, connector words, words before it, words after it, but that whole population of those thousand variations of that one keyword is what made the whole blog commercially valuable.

Buckley Barlow: Yeah, that's great. Now, you're big on understanding and analyzing search intent. That's one thing that I really, really love. You're big into planning. Would you mind helping the insiders understand just how important search intent is in crafting a ranking blog site, especially a rank in the keywords that you know that are going to make your site rank – because I think a lot of companies miss out on how to use this intent as part of their planning efforts.

Nick Eubanks: Definitely. I mean, it's what separates you being able – like, a selling keyword from any old keyword. Being able to refine the intent and try to look at it through a psychological lens of what is this person looking for? What are they expecting? What's the ideal experience? When do those words show that somebody's researching a purchase or they're ready to make a purchase or essentially their credit card in their hand and they're trying to solve their problem, makes it a lot easier to convert that traffic into dollars.

Buckley Barlow: Yeah. Now, part of all this planning is keyword volume searching, right? I think it trips up a lot of people. How do you go about knowing if you can rank for a keyword based on that keyword volume research?

Nick Eubanks: So it's an awesome question. I actually don't look – I mean, so search volume is obviously important, but a lot of – I still talk to people pretty often, but in all ranges of experience in terms of search and just digital, that still sort of get kind of a little too focused on search volume and they won't even look at keywords with under

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200 searches per month, which is really silly. That's a huge mistake in my opinion.

Most of the best keywords that are gonna create the most dollars have search volume sometimes under 50 searches a month, and you just can't discount them. You have to try to find all of them and really sort of plug those into the pages that are gonna best fit getting people into a sales funnel.

The way that I personally evaluate how to attack a keyword or what keywords are able to be targeted is to look at a bunch of data points for the SERP as a whole.

And we could talk about this tool later, but one of the tools that I use a lot that helps me do this and makes my life so much easier and I couldn't live without it is Term Explorer because what it does is when you use the analyzer, it actually goes out and scrapes the first page of Google for all the URLs that rank for any, you know, one of the specific keywords.

And then for each of those URLs, each of those pages, it goes and gets all the data that you need to actually make these decisions, so pieces of information like how many words are on the page total. Is the keyword in the domain or the URL or the page title? How many times does it occur on the page? How many links are to the domain? How many links are to the page? Page rank at the domain and the page level.

It has a couple computed calculations that are actually pretty good in terms of barometer accuracy, things like what's the difficulty of this keyword? What's the link strength? What's the trust of this particular URL? All things that when they're below – essentially a logarithmic threshold if you think of it as ten, you know, it's on a score of one to ten, but it's logarithmic, things that are below four, three or four, are pretty easy targets. And it really lets you dial in with the rank potentially.

So you're looking at ten URLs and you can quickly identify these lines, these thresholds within the search. And you start to understand what your rank potential actually is. And is it realistic to go after ranking No. 3 on this SERP? No, but can we get to No. 5? Yeah, looks like we can.

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And then backing into it from there and figuring, you know, fifth position's gonna give you maybe eight or nine percent of that monthly search volume. You can get a little bit more if you use some structured data or you have a really attractive or catchy page title. There's ways to obviously get that CTR number up a little bit.

But, yeah, I sort of always start there and look at the SERP as a whole and consider it sort of like a – it's like a strip mall, and it's where can I fit my store into this real estate?

Buckley Barlow: Yeah, that's good. I'm sure there are a lot of people that are constantly asking you for free advice and, "Hey, walk me through exactly what you did. I wanna do what you did." And of course that's why you have courseware and other content.

But if you wouldn't mind, I think it would be fantastic if you would give just this basic one-step, two-step, three-step approach on building a ranking blog like SEONick.net that you could eventually sell. What would that summary look like?

Nick Eubanks: Totally.

Buckley Barlow: Of course, you don't have to give everything away, and I'm talking like a four or five-minute overview. Let's talk about that for a second.

Nick Eubanks: No, absolutely. I think the very first thing is niching down is the way I've heard it described that I really like. So taking a vertical, like let's say business consulting, and then going into ideas for business consulting as a niche, but that's a huge niche still, so niching down until you find a spot that's just tight enough that you can actually go after it and you can start to build some brand awareness around it, and you can use it as a theme for your content.

One of the first people that did this in the SEO space is my buddy John Cooper. He went out there and he's like, you know, there's all these SEO blogs, but there's really not a blog that's just about link building. There are now; there's tons of them. But he was like, "I'm gonna own this space."

And in order to do that, he identified a flagship keyword, which was link-building strategies. And he put in the time and the research and then ultimately the content development to say, "I'm gonna own the

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No. 1 ranking for this term.” That keyword, I found out, drives 60 percent of the traffic, that one keyword, no variations, just that keyword –

Buckley Barlow: Interesting.

Nick Eubanks: – 60 percent of the traffic to his blog, which is amazing – and dangerous, but amazing.

But carving out a niche like that, I think, is really cool. So if it’s the business idea space and you wanna potentially start building relevancy around terms that would potentially drive leads for consulting clients for business consulting, identify what a niche within that idea space is. Is it productivity? Is it project management? Is it staffing? Is it AR management, AP management? Like, niching down into a niche, I think is the absolute first step.

Buckley Barlow: Okay. Second step?

Nick Eubanks: Second step is to use that niche as an overall theme and try to do keyword research to find, you know, identify what a footprint in that space is gonna look like, so finding keywords that sort of fit all stages of the funnel, problem keywords, so lots of how-tos, people looking for potential solutions, whether it’s solutions for software or solutions for processes, solutions for documents, templates, the idea is space in general and not just business ideas, any ideas.

I read about gardening ideas. I got real into urban gardening when I lived in Philly before I moved out to the suburbs, and I was always looking for ideas on how to get my garden to perform with less of my time. But still, I wanted to be cranking out peppers and tomatoes as much as possible, so looking for ideas on how to collect rainwater and then how to create –

Buckley Barlow: Love it, love it.

Nick Eubanks: – natural watering systems, things that you can go – again, these are not high-volume terms. You can’t get enamored and completely stuck on why – I only wanna find terms that again have over 500 searches per month.

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So the interesting thing about Keyword Planner – and even Term Explorer uses Keyword Planner data; they just get it in way bigger volumes than Google would give it to you, which is really cool. But a keyword has to have ten searches per month for it to show up. If it doesn't have ten searches per month, Google reports it as zero.

What's interesting though is there also seems to be a bit of a lag with data getting into Keyword Planner, I've noticed. So there'll be terms that start to really pick up and have pretty significant volume, hundreds, even thousands of searches, but if it's been less than, say, three weeks – my gauge is 20, 25 days would be my guess – it's not gonna be in Keyword Planner yet, but it will be in Google Trends.

So actually paying attention to the trends for these niches, so identifying a niche, identifying the trend lines which are there, which it could be stable or it could be rising – you just don't want to go into a hyper niche that's starting to drop off unless it's so significant that there's enough traffic to be had.

And then I think the very next step would be to create some test content. Put a lot of time and effort into creating – I wrote this ranty post a couple years ago on SEONick called, “Do You Deserve a First-Page Ranking?” And it was this Tweet from –

Buckley Barlow: It's a good one. I like that one.

Nick Eubanks: It's very ranty though. But there as this Tweet that sparked the whole idea, and it was this Tweet from Russ Jones, the CEO of Virante – I think they're still called Virante. And it was, “When people ask me – when clients ask me –” this is him talking – “can I rank in the Top 10 of Google for this keyword, I ask them, are you ready to build one of the ten best pages on the internet for that keyword?”

And that's the exact way to think about it. It really is – Google's a user experience company, and on-page is important; links and relevancy and all these things are super important, but if your content doesn't deserve to rank, it shouldn't be ranking.

Buckley Barlow: Yeah. So –

Nick Eubanks: Go ahead.

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Buckley Barlow: So basically what you're saying on that Step 3 is, hey, you've taken the time to identify your niche. You're basically just killing it in all variations of keyword, in terms of implementation. And then of course the content has to be epic. It's gotta be amazing. And are you thinking long-form content does best, or are you still looking at —

Nick Eubanks: I think you have to test it. Again, because niches are so different and it's so subjective, I think you have to do — if I'm just gonna spread — like, let's say I wanted to really start building the go-to, like, I wanted to be the Jon Loomer of Twitter ads, you think, you know, he's synonymous with Facebook advertising and Facebook ad consulting. His content's amazing.

There really isn't somebody who owns that Twitter ad space, so if I wanted to go into the Twitter ad space, for example, I'd probably create some different pieces of content. I would try a big how-to guide with a bunch of sections carved out and maybe some nice process graphics and I'd have that as one piece.

And then maybe I'd do a podcast and try to get somebody from Twitter or get somebody who uses Twitter advertising a lot for their business, likely a software business. I know they do really well. There's also some — one of our clients who sells sneakers, Twitter ads are awesome for them as well. Who knows? Sneaker ads like Twitter.

So podcast; I would try a video; I would do different forms of content to see which would work for that audience. And what I would be using to gauge my success there would ultimately be social mentions and engagement.

But then also on the backside, how many links was I able to pick up? Are people sharing this in blog posts? Are people using this as a reference point? Are people using the content that I created as a foundation to build their content — because that's what you want your content not be ultimately. If your content is foundational and people are gonna use it as building blocks for their arguments and their posts and their content, you're in the best place you can be.

Buckley Barlow: That's great. Now, you have this method called pumpkin hacking, and I think it ties in nicely to just this one, two-step, three-step — there are so many other steps in making a site rank, but I think that

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is a great primer and start for somebody that's listening for the first time saying, "Jeez, I really want to get into SEO. I want to get my blog moving." Let's talk pumpkin hacking.

Nick Eubanks: Yeah, so the idea of pumpkin hacking is essentially it comes from, I mean, I don't – do you mean actually go into where the term comes from?

Buckley Barlow: No, don't worry about it, no.

Nick Eubanks: I mean, the long and short of it is just focusing on what works and just doing more of what works. It's the 80/20 on steroids essentially.

Buckley Barlow: No, feel free to use the analogy. I think that's fun. We're both into gardening.

Nick Eubanks: Yeah, so if you want that thousand-pound pumpkin, you have to be willing to cut the cord on the 800-pound pumpkin. And the way you apply it to SEO is when you start to see things that are working, pouring more time and energy into focusing on what's working and not having your ego essentially attached or your feelings and emotions attached to some of the other things that you want if they're just not working. And it's not giving up. It's just focusing on what works.

So the increased website keyword on SEONick is a great example because I backed into that term. I didn't create that post with the goal of starting to rank, like, ranking for that keyword. I had to change the page title several times and ultimately change the content in that post as I noticed I started to rank for it.

I started to see it in the top of Page 2, and I was, like, man, the visits that are coming through this keyword are really good visits, and I'm getting – and additionally, at that point before I did products, it was like I'm getting a lot of email signups from this keyword. I need to rank – I need to put more energy into this. I need to get more links for it. I need to get it out there.

So I sort of went on a promotional tear for the first probably six to eight months. And at that point, that would have been – I don't wanna pat myself on the back, but it was really one of the first people to write about a big traffic case study.

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And it was before Neil Patel, like, before Quick Sprout really exploded and started getting to be where it is now – I think it's 400,000 or 500,000 visits a month. But before he started really cranking on traffic, it was one of the first posts that started talking about getting to this big milestone for a blog or a website, which was 100,000 visits per month.

And so a lot of people wanted me to talk about it. So I went and I found a bunch of my own opportunities. I would pitch it to a lot of blogs, a lot of podcasts actually. And I went outside of SEO though. I talked to people who had podcasts about building software because that's what we did, or starting new businesses in other countries because that's what we did.

Higher Zoom is I think what they're called now, but they had a podcast called Down to the Higher and talked about how I staffed up a 32-person company with all Japanese employees. I got creative with how, like, the audiences that I went and talked about it in because the idea was I just wanted to promote it as many places as possible.

But all those links started to build up. And as I continued to adjust and make tweaks, I eventually started to see it rise, right? I started to see the rankings for those core keywords start to hit Position 7, Position 5, Position 3.

And then as soon as Position 1 hit, traffic floodgates, you know, my blog started to level up. I think at that point, I was really trying to get to 10,000 visits. And it was like one month it was 8,000; the next month, it was 15,000, then it was 20,000. Then I converted to WP Engine, and it was 30,000, and it just kept going.

Buckley Barlow:

When you have content that is resonating, other content that's not, and let's call it cutting out the smaller pumpkins, how do you go about cutting off the content or the pages? How do you just kill those pages and focus on the ones that are working? Is it more about promotion and social engagement nowadays with some of the new indicators for the Google algorithm that we see today?

Nick Eubanks:

I'd say it's twofold. I think definitely promotion – I will stop trying to promote it. I'll stop pushing it on my social channels and other people's social channels and any active promotion.

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But it also comes down to if the page is just not – and this is where log files – log analysis starts to make sense and become really important – if the page is a dog, and it's just not ranking for anything meaningful and it barely is getting traffic, it gets no engagement, leaving it on the site but setting it to no index, like, making that decision that I'm not gonna let this eat up my crawl budget anymore, so I'm gonna tell Google to ignore it and I'm gonna serve up spider food elsewhere.

Buckley Barlow: Well, that's cool. We're gonna talk about that crawl budget later, and I'm excited about that. Now, the group that acquired your site, they did so based on keywords results in search, right?

Nick Eubanks: Yeah, they wanted – they're out buying up – they're an SEO provider, and they're out buying up sites that rank for terms that tend to generate leads. So what they wanted to see when we first started the conversation was they wanted to see what the lead volume looked like. So it was all about the lead volume.

How many contact forms was I getting a day on the SEO consulting page? And what were the size of those? So it was as much about asking the right questions in that contact form, like budget, like, what is your monthly budget? How soon are you trying to get started? What's your website? What are keywords? Asking the right questions to get qualified leads as well as the volume of the leads.

Buckley Barlow: That's cool. Now, we're gonna be heading into the e-commerce series here in a second, but what other niche categories are interesting you right now and why?

Nick Eubanks: Energy's really interesting because that frontier is just exploding.

Buckley Barlow: That's energy, right?

Nick Eubanks: Yes, yeah, energy's really in a really cool spot, and there's so many tentacles on the energy octopus. You can really go down any one of those. You can niche down into anything, home, auto, automation. From a real estate management perspective, there's just – there's so many, it's endless.

And those leads are really – it's very interesting because it's not just like you can use them to drive consulting leads, but you can also use

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them – you can sell those leads to brokers for people, you know – with energy being deregulated, it's like the gold rush all over again.

Buckley Barlow: Perfect, perfect. Definitely need to ask you, you know, you've mentioned a couple tools that you're using. What other tools help you do your job well, and why do you choose them versus a competitive tool?

Nick Eubanks: So SEMrush, I love. Their link – they're an anomaly, but I'm a huge fan. They're an anomaly because their index is amazing. It's pretty accurate. They are great for traffic. They're great for – I like their rank tracking currently. I love their keyword research tools.

Their link index sucks. It's just so piss-poor. And I have a whole bunch of friends there. Their director of marketing's an awesome guy, Mike Stricker, but I've told him this before too. And I'm not trying to poo-poo the product because I'm a huge fan and I'm a big affiliate. But it's, God, I just – you can't rely on the link data.

Buckley Barlow: Yeah, you wanna see them work on that.

Nick Eubanks: I would love to see them solve that problem because I think they're super powerful, and they're one of the biggest players in the SEO tools space. I mean, just even, you know, pure dollars, they're a big company. Yeah, so that's a big favorite of mine.

I like Screaming Frog. I think Dan Sharp and his team built a nice product.

I like Gareth and Patrick Hathaway's tool, URL Profile way more. I love the flexibility. I love it for content analysis and content gap analysis.

But because these aren't hosted, we still use Deep Crawl. Like, my agency, we're a Deep Crawl customer and that's our go-to. As soon as we're talking to a new customer, fire up Deep Crawl, run that report, and it's awesome for finding, like, redirect chains, which we find all the time with e-comm sites.

We were just talking to an e-comm site two weeks ago that had redirect chains of eight URLs, eight. There's no link equity left at the end of that chain. You figure a 10 or 15 percent equity reduction every time you've got a redirect, so you always want to keep them

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one to one, like, one chain, so one redirect from one URL to another URL to another URL. One chain is killing off a third of your link equity. So imagine eight.

It's like, if we get – I hope we get this client because we're gonna be superheroes overnight. Everything'll be fixed in 30 days. It's just – it's so bad.

Buckley Barlow: How are you gonna fix it? What's the strategy there?

Nick Eubanks: It's literally just go and take all the index, all the redirects, take the original sources, break down all eight of them and write one-to-ones for all eight of the redirects, all the old instances, the URLs, just change all those chain redirects from a one-to-one from what it was to what it is now.

Buckley Barlow: That's perfect.

Nick Eubanks: Super simple.

Buckley Barlow: That's perfect. Well, this is great stuff. I think we start moving toward e-commerce. Well, that's a wrap, insiders, of Part 1 of this two-part series.

Nick, thanks a lot for coming on and just going over the basics of SEO and the way that you've gone about building up SEONick.net. Obviously, insiders, Nick knows his SEO. This next part in this Nick series is gonna be more advanced, so buckle up. And I hope that you can take these nuggets of wisdom to the bank and start implementing some of his ideas on your own site.

So you can find Nick over at SEOauv.com or head on over to our show notes at beintheknow.co/podcast. You'll find his episode there and you'll get all the links and show notes, tools mentioned in this interview.

Now, tune in for the next episode to hear how Nick built his eight-figure e-commerce company using SEO as the base, the foundation for his growth. And that's Part 2 of this two-part series.

Announcer: We appreciate you joining us for this episode of In the Know. You can find show notes, past episodes and special giveaways for

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insiders at beintheknow.co. Thanks again, and we'll see you next Tuesday on In the Know.

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Duration: 27 minutes